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New York

President:	Mr. Li Baodong	(China)
Members:	Bosnia and Herzegovina	Mr. Barbalić
	Brazil	Mrs. Viotti
	Colombia	Mr. Osorio
	France	Mr. Bonne
	Gabon	Mr. Messone
	Germany	Mr. Berger
	India	Mr. Hardeep Singh Puri
	Lebanon	Mr. Assaf
	Nigeria	Mrs. Ogwu
	Portugal	Mr. Cabral
	Russian Federation	Mr. Pankin
	South Africa	Mr. Laher
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Parham
	United States of America	Mrs. DiCarlo

Agenda

The situation in Liberia

Twenty-second progress report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Mission in Liberia (S/2011/72)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

Expression of sympathy to the Government and people of Japan

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): Japan was recently struck by a strong earthquake and a tsunami, which resulted in injuries, loss of life and significant damage to property. At the outset of today's meeting, I should like, on behalf of the members of the Council, to ask that all those present in the Council Chamber now stand and join in observing a minute of silence. We express our condolences to the victims of the devastating earthquake and tsunami and to their relatives, as well as our sincere sympathy and condolences to the Government and people of Japan.

The members of the Security Council observed a minute of silence.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in Liberia

Twenty-second progress report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Mission in Liberia (S/2011/72)

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): Under rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I should like to invite the representative of Liberia to participate in this meeting.

Under rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Ms. Ellen Margrethe Løj, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and head of the United Nations Mission in Liberia, to participate in this meeting.

Under rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Prince Zeid Ra'ad Zeid Al-Hussein, Chair of the Liberia configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission and Permanent Representative of Jordan, to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2011/72, which contains the twenty-second progress report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Mission in Liberia.

I now give the floor to Ms. Løj.

Ms. Løj: I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for this opportunity to present the twenty-second progress report (S/2011/72) of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL). Given the Council's busy schedule, I will keep my remarks brief. The full text of my statement will be distributed to Council members.

Liberia concluded voter registration on 12 February. The exercise went well, with no major security incidents or prohibitive logistical challenges. The Liberia National Police provided static security where materials were stored and, with UNMIL assistance, increased patrols to voter registration centres. There were some concerns, however, including reports of political aspirants transporting supporters to register in counties other than where they resided, and some reports of attempted multiple registrations and of registrations of foreign nationals. However, these were not of a magnitude to undermine the process. Simple logistics will make it difficult to successfully vote twice on election day.

It is encouraging that 1.79 million registration forms were retrieved, representing 89 per cent of the estimated number of eligible voters — an almost 30 per cent increase from the 1.3 million people who registered in 2005.

UNMIL provided targeted assistance and logistical support by airlifting registration materials to and from inaccessible locations. I would like to underline how encouraged I am that the National Elections Commission and other national institutions maximized their logistical capacities and were successful in deploying to most of the 19 warehouses and to all registration centres.

Lessons drawn from this process will be used in planning the referendum and the general elections later this year. However, the challenges involved in those will be significantly greater, as they will be one-day events and logistics will be complicated by Liberia's heavy rainy season.

In terms of funding the $47 million electoral budget, the response has been positive. However, a $4 million gap remains in the basket fund managed by the United Nations Development Programme. I call on donors to help fill that gap.

I cannot overstate the importance of successful elections and a peaceful post-election transition to solidifying the progress in Liberia. A major piece of the success will be about ensuring an environment conducive to healthy political debate and competition. The National Elections Commission has a major responsibility in that regard. It must retain its independence and objectivity in order to instil confidence in the electoral process. The political debate is likely to intensify, with several elections-related challenges already in the courts. I will therefore continue to encourage all political actors to express their ideas, but to do so in a way that does not undermine trust and confidence in the democratic system, and UNMIL will continue to employ its impartial good offices in this regard.

As requested in resolution 1938 (2010), UNMIL's consolidation, drawdown and withdrawal benchmarks have been revised to create a set of transition benchmarks. They focus on core areas considered vital to the process of handing over security responsibilities from UNMIL to the Government. They also outline contextual areas that have been identified as central to Liberia's long-term stability, including the range of institutional capacities to address the root causes of Liberia's conflict.

Work towards planning for the transition of security responsibilities from UNMIL to the Government of Liberia has continued apace, and I have been encouraged by the commitment of the joint UNMIL/Government transition working group. However, the process has also illustrated how significant the challenges still are to Liberia's security sector, especially with regard to the logistics, communications and mobility capacities of the police and the immigration service. Continued international engagement and assistance to the process will be crucial.

Liberia's inclusion on the agenda of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC), and the Government's decision to identify security sector reform, rule of law and national reconciliation as priorities under the PBC, is a major opportunity for Liberia. Prince Zeid, Chairman of the Liberia country configuration, will brief the Council on his findings from his two recent visits to Liberia.

Since the report was issued, there has been significantly increased focus on Liberia's border with Côte d'Ivoire. In the first approximately three months of the Ivorian crisis, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees registered almost 40,000 refugees in Liberia. In just the past 18 days, however, at least another 50,000 are estimated to have crossed into the country. The influx has stretched the resources of generous host communities that were already living under difficult conditions, and poor infrastructure and insufficient resources are huge challenges to the humanitarian response.

A humanitarian flash appeal for Liberia requesting $55 million was launched in January to cover an influx of 50,000 refugees. We now have over 90,000 refugees, and the flow continues. The original appeal is being revised to reflect the increased numbers, and I cannot emphasize strongly enough the need for a much more generous response to this appeal.

In addition to the humanitarian challenges, the situation poses security concerns. Both UNMIL and Government security institutions have increased their presence and patrolling along the border, but ensuring coverage of all vulnerable areas along the over 700-kilometre and extremely porous border is proving overwhelming. These operations have also clearly highlighted security agencies' capacity gaps. The efforts of the Police Emergency Response Unit and the immigration service to reinforce their presence in key areas are often paralysed by basic equipment and logistical deficiencies.

Since I last briefed the Council (see S/PV.6379), the political and security environment in Liberia has become more complex. Not only is the election calendar coming clearly into view, but the situation along Liberia's border with Côte d'Ivoire requires close monitoring for potential security fallouts. Liberia is much stronger today than it was eight years ago when UNMIL arrived on the ground. Nevertheless, we should not take these eight years of unbroken peace for granted, and continued and increased international engagement will be needed.

I cannot conclude my remarks without expressing gratitude to all our troop- and police-contributing countries. They provide us with the resources to carry out our mandate. I continue to prioritize the welfare and care of our troops and police, and I urge the troop- and police-contributing countries to continue to support us through regular and improved predeployment training and in-mission inspections. I

also attach great importance to strict compliance with the United Nations policy on sexual exploitation and abuse, and would like once again to urge contributing countries to ensure that investigations and action are promptly followed up and shared with the Mission.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank Ms. Løj for her briefing.

I now give the floor to His Excellency Prince Zeid.

Prince Zeid Ra'ad Zeid Al-Hussein: I am honoured to present this briefing as Chairman of the Peacebuilding Commission's configuration for Liberia, and to be joining the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Liberia and head of the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL), Her Excellency Ms. Ellen Margrethe Løj. Given my current association with Liberia, I would also like to commend publicly the superb leadership of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General in all areas involving UNMIL's work — and there is not a single person I met in Liberia who does not agree with this assessment — and to acknowledge the very high quality and caliber of her two Deputies, as well as the great contributions of the UNMIL Force Commander and the Commissioner of United Nations Police. With every visit to the field, I am also reminded of the extraordinary talents of the United Nations staff members, and find myself in a position always of never knowing enough.

I would also like, Mr. President, with your kind permission to note publicly what I have said privately to the Council on a previous occasion. What I find encouraging about the future of Liberia is the great number of talented and committed officials and public personalities from the highest levels of Government through the county and down to the district levels; from the judiciary and Parliament to the independent commissions; in the Liberia National Police and the Bureau of Immigration and Naturalization; in civil and religious society, and in the media. I have completed two visits to Liberia and I have learned enormously from all of them.

Before I focus on my presentation, may I first support entirely what the Special Representative has said with respect to the Ivorian refugees. On 19 February, I visited Sanniquellie in Nimba county — the worst-affected county — and spoke both to the representatives of the county and to the senior Liberian officials who were with me. From all of them, I grasped fully just how quickly the security situation could degenerate either as a result of any further swelling in the number of Ivorian refugees or if no assistance were given to the Liberian authorities — in the form of transportation and communications — to manage this delicate situation as it exists now.

While in Sanniquellie, I also met with a number of traditional leaders to learn about the alternative traditional land dispute mechanisms used by them. Many observers, as well as officials both in and out of Liberia, believe that sorting out the numerous land disputes would, as a priority measure and in conjunction with other measures — such as the use of the Palava Hut discussions, youth employment programmes and ceremonies to memorialize the past — be sufficient in leading the country towards national reconciliation.

What became clear to me in the course of my discussions with these traditional leaders, however, was the extent to which the problems of Liberia extend some distance beyond the resolution of competing land claims. While it is undoubtedly true that sorting out land disputes would indeed go a long way towards blunting the lingering ill feelings that exist between the two principal communities in the country, they will not remove them. The land disputes have only amplified what is already there and has existed for a long time; it does not account for them entirely. The Palava Hut mechanism is not a sufficient basis for dealing with the competing historical narratives either. It is a means for resolving fixed disputes, one that the Liberians place a great deal of trust in and which has enjoyed broad success, but it generally works well only until the next crisis, problem or dispute comes along. If it had been sufficient to sort out the deeper resentments, Liberia would not have suffered the upheavals it has over the course of 30 years.

What is needed is a firm foundation in the form of a single, uniform historical narrative. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission proposed the establishment of a historical commission, and I believe that should be the centerpiece of and the first step towards the construction of a unified national memory. The Government has, commendably, picked this up, although it has asked the Ministry of Education to undertake this activity. Most respectfully, I believe, however, that this requires a much higher profile, and I will continue to discuss this and other matters relating to national reconciliation with the Liberian authorities in due course, including the establishment of an

archive where all the documents of State are housed and safeguarded.

Once a memory is established, the Palava Hut mechanism will have greater meaning as an instrument of national reconciliation, in that, hopefully, it will also provide a forum for reckoning, the precursor to reconciliation. With a well-designed youth employment programme in place, surely the foundations for a lasting peace would be more secure. I should add that we are still awaiting a World Bank assessment of its own youth employment programme before agreeing to the pilot project, as provided for in the Statement of Mutual Assessment.

When in Sanniquellie, I also visited a circuit court that had recently been renovated by the United Nations. In speaking to a thoughtful judge who was that day presiding over a particular proceeding, it came to my attention that while all cases before the circuit court were jury trials — unless requested otherwise by the Counsel for Defence — funds did not exist for the sequestration or the isolation of the jury, and most, if not virtually all, trials at that level in Liberia suffer from this shortcoming. The upshot is clear, therefore: the justice system remains very prone to potential contamination. The Liberian authorities, of course, are well aware of this, and the Law Reform Commission, whose commissioners appear to be exceedingly able, will by now have begun drafting, together with the Ministry of Justice, a new jury law.

I raise this point to underscore the fragility of the judiciary following the many years of conflict and instability. The Government is very much committed to providing judicial services to areas beyond Monrovia, but it must be careful not to export a system which is, in many ways, broken. The authorities must, for example, as a matter of some urgency, put into place a case-tracking system. In my meetings with the very capable Minister of Justice, I was informed that there were also plans to draft a witness protection law and a law broadening the subject-matter jurisdiction of the magistrate's courts, where possible. These steps need to be supported, particularly as progress is now being made on the creation of the first hub — of a total five security and justice hubs — in Gbanga, for which an initial disbursement of funds from the Peacebuilding Fund has already been made available. I anticipate that several buildings within the hub will have been constructed by the time the configuration visits Liberia this coming June.

It remains a great concern of mine that efforts by the Liberians to rebuild their court system will require a considerable amount of time, and so the system itself will likely remain weak and penetrable in the short term. There is, however, an idea being promoted within the Liberian Government — although I hasten to add that it is still in its infancy — that has generated some interest, focusing on the establishment of special courts for serious economic crimes with, potentially, a specialized police force. In view of the threat posed by transnational organized crime to Liberia and other countries of the subregion, I believe this to be an idea worth investigating in greater detail with the Liberian Government.

As a general rule, the approach I feel the Peacebuilding Commission needs to adopt is for us to take the excellent ideas generated by the Liberian officials themselves, such as the creation of the hub, the creation of a historical commission or the creation of special courts for serious economic crimes, and to explore with them the manner in which we could most be helpful.

Finally, prior to my last visit to Liberia, I had very useful discussions in Washington, D.C., with officials from the United States Department of Defense and from the United States State Department, including the United States Agency for International Development. I also met with international civil society actors engaged in Liberia and had very interesting meetings with the World Bank. I also held talks in Brussels with European Union officials who are involved in Liberia and was very much impressed by their insights. Here in New York, my meetings with INTERPOL, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and the International Centre for Transitional Justice all were extremely beneficial. In all those discussions, I was encouraged to find a convergence of opinion: we all marvelled at how Liberia has achieved so much since the end of the fighting in 2003, but all realized fully just how breathtaking the challenges confronting Liberia still are, and that, ultimately, we take nothing for granted.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I now give the floor to the representative of Liberia.

Ms. Kamara (Liberia): I am grateful for the opportunity to make this brief statement as the Council prepares to consider the twenty-second progress report on the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL)

(S/2011/72). Let me begin by thanking the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Liberia, Ms. Ellen Margrethe Løj, and Prince Zeid for their insightful presentations. My Government appreciates the committed services being rendered to Liberia by these two eminent persons, in particular their respective contributions to the process of peacebuilding and peace consolidation in Liberia.

I would like to also thank the Secretary-General, the Council, the men and women in UNMIL and the countries that have contributed them, and the rest of the international community for their steadfast support for Liberia. Indeed, many of the Governments which you, the members of the Council, represent — including yours, Mr. President — continue to provide valuable support to Liberia's recovery. It is only through this combination of global efforts within the United Nations framework, strong bilateral partnerships and an unwavering commitment of the Government of Liberia that Liberians can truly envisage enduring peace, stability and equitable growth and development.

When the present Government, under the leadership of President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, assumed its responsibilities in 2006, the situation in Liberia was indeed dire. Significant gains have been made since then, and in some respects Liberia has achieved certain goals in record time. In other areas, however, progress has not met expectations, and many challenges remain. The report under consideration today presents a balanced picture of progress and constraints, systemic weaknesses and critical gaps. It confirms, indeed, that Liberia still has some way to go.

Liberia's request in May last year to be placed on the agenda of the Peacebuilding Commission was underpinned by its acknowledgement of those critical gaps and a determination to address them. The Commission's engagement with Liberia provides a platform and framework for accelerating action in the priority areas of the rule of law, security sector reform and national reconciliation, areas which are inextricably linked to UNMIL's benchmarks and transition strategy. It is important, therefore, that activities on both tracks be carefully synchronized and that decisions be guided by the realities on the ground.

Liberia has reached a critical turning point. Critical because Liberians, in a few months' time, will be going to the polls to choose their leaders in the country's second post-conflict elections. This exercise is crucial, as it will test the commitment to democratic governance and the ability to manage democratic processes in a peaceful manner.

Against the backdrop of this preoccupation with national elections, developments in neighbouring Côte d'Ivoire and the spillover effect of a continuing influx of refugees into Liberia give rise to serious concern. Not only do these developments present security challenges, as the Special Representative noted earlier, they impose a heavy burden on a Government and a people whose resources are already extremely limited. Moreover, the cross-border activities heighten the country's vulnerability and present risks of destabilization. We would like to urge the international community to maintain critical focus on the escalating crisis in the sisterly country of Côte d'Ivoire, as we fear that failure to resolve the impasse could undermine the gains made not only in Liberia, but also in the West African subregion.

We ask you, Mr. President, and members of the Council not to allow the situations in Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire to become forgotten humanitarian crises. There is an urgent need for resources to enable the humanitarian community and the Government of Liberia to prepare an effective response to the growing protection needs of those who have been displaced internally and externally.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I now invite Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion on the subject.

The meeting rose at 10.40 a.m.